SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (WEST BENGAL): Madam, I also associate myself with this Special Mention.

श्रीमती चन्द्रकला पांडे (पश्चिमी बंगाल): उपसभापति महोदया, मैं भी इनको ऐसोसिएट करती हूं ।

Need to give financial assistance to flood-affected State of Assam

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH (Assam): Madam, I wish to draw the kind attention of the Government to the grave situation which has arisen due to the relentless floods, which are currently on a damage-spree in Assam. It has devastated the State, rendered lakhs of people homeless and disrupted communication links in the entire State of Assam. The mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries are in spate, following torrential rains. The water level of the Brahmaputra is running above the danger mark at various places. As a result, at many places, roads have been submerged and bridges have been swept away. Many areas of the State have been completely cut off from the rest of the world. Many people who have lost their homes are marooned in available high lands in the vicinity.

The Government as also the Parliament, are rightly seized of the problems being faced by the drought-affected States of the country. But there is an equal need to provide financial support to the flood-affected States, including Assam. There has been a long standing demand to declare the perennial floods of Assam as a national calamity. This issue needs to be addressed with a great urgency because it has inter-State and even international ramifications.

Madam, in order to put an end to the unending saga of floods and find a long-term solution to this problem, I would demand that the Government, instead of offering only lip-service, should give serious thought to various projects, such as, the Subansiri Dam, the Dihang Project, the Tipaimukh Dam, etc. I urge upon the Government to release the Central assistance to Assam at this time of distress.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Dr. Manmohan Singh has also raised this issue and the Finance Minister has responded to that.

Development of tourism in Orissa

SHRI B.J. PANDA (Orissa): Madam, Orissa, though the poorest and the most backward State, has a vast potential for development of tourism. The cash-starved State, afflicted with natural calamities one after another in

the recent past, looks towards the Centre for financial assistance for conservation and preservation of its rich heritage sites and for the overall development of the tourism industry.

The State has ancient cities, with a number of shrines and temples; for example, Bhubaneshwar, Puri, Konark, Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, Udaigiri, sightseeing places like the Chilka Lake, Puri Beach, Chandipur, Wild Life Conservatory at Nandankanan, the Similipol Tiger Reserve, and annual festivals like Rath Yatra, Konark Dance Festival, etc. These places need immediate development to attract both domestic and foreign tourists. The roads connecting these tourist centres need to be widened.

The important and famous tourist centres need to be connected by air, to attract foreign tourists. Apart from helping the State financially, it will add to our foreign exchange reserves and bring in its wake many other benefits like employment. Though belated, the Centre should pay immediate attention to this and come up with Central assistance, formulate plans and projects to achieve the objective, in consultation with the State Government.

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): Madam, I would like to respond to this. We are giving top priority to the tourism industry in Orissa. As in the case of Uttaranchal, I visited Orissa also for three days, and I had an extensive tour. Large amounts have been sanctioned. Rs.2 crores straightaway for Lalitgiri, Udaigiri and Khandgiri. The work has already been started. About Rs. 2 crores have been sanctioned, not only for the Konark complex, but also for the entire area around it. Then, we have also taken up a large amount of work in Raghurajapura village, which is a great village, from the artistic point of view.

We are also taking up a lot of work in Kalinga, where the war took place. There are also edicts there. Work has been taken up even in the area of beach tourism, in Orissa.

I have only one grievance and, in this regard, I would like to request the hon. Member to use his good offices with the State Government. The Central Government's improving those complexes, and the State Government allowing a lot of encroachments to take place around them, with all types of slums, sheds and stalls, can't go together. And they want me to light up! What should I light up? These encroachments? Therefore, the State Government also must share the responsibility, to ensure that there are no encroachments around those places, which are of

cultural importance, which are of great significance, from the point of view of tourism and from the point of view of general good governance also.

So, we are trying to synthesise three elements-the cultural element, the tourism element and good State governance. Unless those places are clean, it is of no use. I had been to these places, which you mentioned. I visited all the temples. I had been to Lalitgiri. There are encroachments inside the temple, outside the temple and all around the temple. We have spent money on it. There is a great pond around it. But all waste is being dumped in it. Therefore, spending money on the one side, and not maintaining them properly, on the other, is counter-productive. I have written to all the Chief Ministers requesting them to ensure that the new initiatives that we have taken brings out good results for the nation, as a whole. This will happen only if they cooperate in curbing this type of illegal and unhealthy activity.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY (Karnataka): Madam, we must appreciate the approach of the Minister. If hon. Ministers come forward with answers, whenever Special Mentions are there, it would be wonderful. I am grateful to him. I think, the House should also be grateful to him. The Minister is armed with the facts. His knowledge is really appreciated. Whenever Members raise Special Mentions, like him, if all the Ministers respond to it, it would be good for the nation.

Harnessing of water resources in Orissa

SHRIMATI SUSHREE DEVI (Orissa): Madam, Orissa has been afflicted with severe calamities one after the other in the recent past. The super cyclone of 1999 had taken 1,00,000 human lives, left 4 lakh cattle dead, affected 12 million population, 400 villages and 1.67 million hectares of land. The devastation and havoc caused by the cyclone and floods of last year are still fresh in the minds of the people that continue to haunt them. The last year's floods and super cyclone had washed away river and saline embankments and caused breaches in almost all rivers and canals in the State, which once flooded can cause immense damage and destruction. While there is a scarcity of water in one part of the State, other areas very often get flooded. There is, therefore, an immediate necessity to harness the water of floods and use it in the drought hit area. For this I would request the Central Government that they should draw short and long-term plans in consultation with the State authorities, to harness the rain water